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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1. Mideast](#)
- [2. Proposed Russia-Syria Arms Deal](#)

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Key stories in the media:  
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During the weekend, all media led with the possibility of IDF action to counter continued rocket strikes at Israeli targets from the northern Gaza Strip; a 17-year-old girl from Sderot was critically wounded in such an attack on Saturday night. The media noted contradictions in official Israeli declarations and statements on the matter. During the weekend, all media reported that, demanding that the PA make a "real effort" to stop terror in the wake of Thursday's Karni Crossing attack, PM Sharon on Friday suspending all contact with the PA -- including any meeting with PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). Yediot quoted an expert in Israel's military industry as saying that the Palestinians have smuggled rockets with a 20-km range into the Gaza Strip, which could hit Ashkelon. Today, Ha'aretz quoted a senior Palestinian defense source as saying that Abbas has issued orders for Palestinian security services in Gaza to deploy in the area from which rockets and mortars are being launched, with a special intervention force of 500-700 officers from the security forces to be formed for the purpose. Maariv and Jerusalem Post printed similar reports. Leading media quoted Abbas as saying Monday that he needs up to one month to organize his new regime. In contrast to highlighted reports that PM Sharon gave Abbas additional time to prove himself, Israel Radio this morning quoted a senior GOI source as saying that Abbas knows that Israel will not exercise self-restraint, that he has little time to act, and that Israel is prepared to respond. Deputy Defense Minister Zeev Boim was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post that the IDF has no alternative but to launch a widespread operation in the Gaza Strip if Abbas fails to act against terrorists and prevent attacks on Israel within the week.

This morning, Israel Radio reported that, demanding an end to rocket strikes, Sderot residents and left- and right-wing politicians are marching in the direction of the northern Gaza Strip of Beit Hanoun. Some of the demonstrators demand that Sharon resign.

On Sunday, Ha'aretz and other media reported that the IDF killed eight Palestinians in Gaza raids on Saturday.

Israel Radio quoted President Bush as saying on Monday on U.S. TV networks that he would not rule out military action against Iran if that country was not more forthcoming about its suspected nuclear weapons program. Yediot reported that Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice is considering visiting the Middle East immediately after the Senate endorses her nomination.

On Monday, Yediot reported that the U.S. and Israel will conduct extensive joint maneuvers in March. The newspaper quoted an Israeli military source as saying that the tension between the Pentagon and Israel's Defense Ministry does not get in the way of defense cooperation between the two countries.

The media reported that the tension along Israel's

northern border continued on Monday, when Hizbullah detonated a third mine in less than a week in the Sheba Farms area. There were no casualties. Leading media reported that the IDF responded by hitting a Hizbullah command post near Tyre.

Leading media reported that a small group of Labor and Yahad Knesset members and left-wing activists headed to Ramallah on Monday to show their support for Abbas and to say that Israel's decision to cut all ties between their governments is a mistake.

Visiting Luxembourg PM and current president of the EU Council of Ministers, Jean Asselborn, was quoted as saying in an interview with Ha'aretz last night: "The 'Arafat excuse' no longer exists. This matter has been resolved with the democratic election of Mahmoud Abbas." Jerusalem Post quoted visiting Japanese FM Nobutaka Machimura as saying on Monday that there can be no peace without a cessation of terror. Citing AP, Ha'aretz reported Monday that Machimura has asked Israel to end weapons sales to Japan's neighbors.

Ha'aretz cited research that appeared in the annual report just released by Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), Middle East Strategic Balance, according to which the IDF's qualitative edge over the Egyptian army has widened, and Egypt has no intention to go on the offensive. The newspaper pits the annual's findings against expressions of concern by Yuval Steinitz, the Chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, and of former head of research at IDF Intelligence Maj. Gen. (res.) Amos Gilad.

Jerusalem Post reported that on Sunday, a PA court sentenced five men from the Gaza Strip suspected of "collaboration" with Israel to prison terms ranging from three to twenty years. On Sunday, the newspaper reported that two young Palestinian men suspected of "collaboration" with Israel were murdered in the Nablus area over the weekend.

On Monday, Jerusalem Post reported that Amman polling stations might bar Iraq-born Israelis from voting in Iraq's elections.

Ha'aretz reported that, "in an apparent victory for radical Muslims and the left wing of the American foreign policy establishment," President Bush has failed to take any action to renominate Middle East scholar Daniel Pipes to the board of the United States Institute of Peace.

Ha'aretz reported that the Tourism Ministry will participate in an international task force whose goal is to rehabilitate tourism in the countries of Southeast Asia devastated by the tsunami.

Ha'aretz today published the results of a poll conducted among Palestinians by the Center for Palestinian Policy and Research in Ramallah in the last days of 2004: some 54 percent of the Palestinians support a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 lines, with border corrections and no massive return of refugees. The newspaper says that this confirms that there has been a change in Palestinian public opinion since the death of Yasser Arafat.

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[1](#). Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Just as the occupation perpetuates terror, terror can perpetuate the occupation. If Abu Mazen wishes to save the disengagement and ensure the liberation of the Gaza Strip and his continued rule, he has no choice but to declare uncompromising war on the terror organizations."

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "It is precisely at this critical moment that the Prime Minister should meet with Abu Mazen and try to create a joint plan of action instead of rolling down the slippery slope to another round of bloodshed."

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 18): "The Prime Minister's decision to give Abu Mazen the cold shoulder until the terror stops is perfectly justified.... [Sharon] wants Gaza to be the threshold

for continued talks and the gradual implementation of the road map."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "[Abbas] is a president without subjects, a general without soldiers."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Abbas may indeed be a pragmatist who recognizes that the Palestinians' terror war has been counterproductive, but it behooves the Egyptians to show leadership by setting an example for him."

Block Quotes:  
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I. "War of the Qassams"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (January 17): "In about half a year, Israel will withdraw of its own free will and choice from the Gaza Strip, and evacuate its settlements from there. The Palestinians will be free of the oppressive occupation, which has become increasingly forceful. It would be reasonable to expect that in anticipation of the liberation of their land, the Palestinians would be occupied in plans for utilization of lands, restoring ruined buildings and roads, mobilizing donations and instating law and order. But instead of expanding the civil activity and preparing for receiving full sovereignty, the Palestinians are firing Qassam rockets from Gaza at Israel and expanding the wave of terror attacks.... The terror being carried out today by the Palestinian organizations in Gaza does not, therefore, even have the pretense of a 'war of liberation.' It is a war of anti-liberation: murderous showy attacks for internal Palestinian propaganda purposes alone.... Just as the occupation perpetuates terror, terror can perpetuate the occupation. If Abu Mazen wishes to save the disengagement and ensure the liberation of the Gaza Strip and his continued rule, he has no choice but to declare uncompromising war on the terror organizations operating there uninterrupted. Only if the president of Palestine dares to put them to the test of fire, will they back down in the face of his determination. After all, he was given a momentous mandate from the Palestinian people, while they were not given a thing."

II. "Time For a Joint Plan of Action"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (January 16): "Ariel Sharon's display of anger at Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) after the suicide bombing at the Karni crossing shows that Israel has chosen to return to the relationship model that was unsuccessfully tried with Yasser Arafat, instead of taking a different path. If there is no sign that Abu Mazen is encouraging terror, if he means what he says, if he did not know about the attack planned a long time before it was carried out, it may be expected that the government of Israel will give him time and support so that he can work toward a total cease-fire.... Abu Mazen has to understand that time is short, and that much of what will happen in the near future between the Israelis and the Palestinians, including Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, depends on him and his determination. At his inauguration, the new chairman condemned terror and called for an end to the cycle of violence. Sharon cannot make do with declarations and good intentions. It is precisely at this critical moment that the Prime Minister should meet with Abu Mazen and try to create a joint plan of action instead of rolling down the slippery slope to another round of bloodshed."

III. "Qassam Trap"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (January 17): "We have to face the truth courageously. At present the IDF has no solution for the problem of the Qassam rockets and the mortars.... [However,] things cannot go on like this, and Hamas has to be stopped. Either it will stop of its own volition, or Abu Mazen will arrive at a cease-fire. If not, Israel will have to do the dirty work itself.... Abu Mazen's problem is that even his own people are not giving him a chance. Nobody is willing to do the dirty work. Abu Ala is not relevant and is not expected to last long in his job. Dahlan is not prepared to roll up his sleeves. Rajoub is not prepared to get his hands dirty. Who in God's name is willing to work with Abu Mazen, to do the unpleasant job he needs, to go out on the streets and do the dirty work? So far, nobody. He is a president without subjects, a general without soldiers. In the meantime,

Iran is also increasing its efforts. Scarcely anyone is in a position to put pressure on Tehran.... If the world lines up behind Abu Mazen, and puts pressure on Israel, and Israel has to enter into negotiations and discuss a permanent agreement, and all our troubles come back in bursts, and we go back to square one, Sharon will be in a bind and in the end he will be yearning for Arafat, who is certainly watching what is taking place now, and enjoying every minute of it."

#### IV. "An Eye For an Eye"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 18): "The Prime Minister's decision to give Abu Mazen the cold shoulder until the terror stops is perfectly justified. This is no trick or gimmick to get out of implementing the disengagement plan. Sharon actually prefers to have someone to talk to on the other side when the pullout goes through.... He wants Gaza to be the threshold for continued talks and the gradual implementation of the road map.... We must disengage from Gaza whether the Palestinians like it or not, and whether they cooperate or not. At the same time, we cannot sit back and resign ourselves to artillery fire on civilian settlements in Israeli territory.... There is a breaking point and a time when the government must take off its gloves and present the other side with a flat ultimatum: for every indiscriminate round of fire on a civilian target, we will retaliate in kind on the closest and most populated Palestinian city. We will give it to them good. An eye for an eye."

#### IV. "Sderot and Cairo"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (January 17): "Israeli citizens, residents of Sderot in particular, are losing patience with the lethargic Palestinian Authority, with Egypt -- and with their own government. First, the Egyptians. Suleiman Awad, a spokesman for President Hosni Mubarak, says: 'All those who want violence to stop should know that Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] does not have a magic wand,' and that he cannot 'condemn' the gunmen and terrorists while ignoring 'the suffering of the Palestinian people.' Mr. Awad, no one is asking Mahmoud Abbas to wave a magic wand. We are asking he employ the potent forces already on the ground in Gaza, including those of Muhammad Dahlan, to assert PA authority. If Abbas can't pull that off in the next several days, chances are he never will.... Moderation begets moderation. Abbas may indeed be a pragmatist who recognizes that the Palestinians' terror war has been counterproductive, but it behooves the Egyptians to show leadership by setting an example for him. What better time than today, in the face of rejectionist violence -- from Hizbullah in the North and Palestinian terrorists in Gaza -- for Cairo to return its ambassador to Israel? Imagine how the ambassador's return would undermine the enemies of reconciliation. And if Egypt, belatedly, did the right thing, chances are Jordan and other Arab states would follow."

#### 12. Proposed Russia-Syria Arms Deal:

##### Summary:

Defense commentator Reuven Pedhazur opined in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Israel should entrust the U.S. with the task of dealing with the issue of the sale of Russian missiles to Syria."

##### Block Quotes:

"Let the U.S. Deal With Syria"

Defense commentator Reuven Pedhazur opined in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 17): "The fear is that terror groups that are equipped with surface-to-air missiles -- whether they be Russian or American (the whereabouts of thousands of Stinger missiles that were handed over to the Mujahideen during the war in Afghanistan remain unknown) -- will endanger civil aviation throughout the world. This is the reason why Israel should entrust the U.S. with the task of dealing with the issue of the sale of Russian missiles to Syria. The Americans and Europeans, and not Israel, should be the ones pressuring the regime in Moscow.... [Furthermore,] just like any other country, including Israel, Syria will not stop arming itself

just because its leader is turning his attention to  
political talks."

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